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SUBJECT: FEBRUARY CONFERENCE ON DEVELOPMENT IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

Classified By: RRT Erbil Leader James Yellin, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

This is an Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT) cable.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: RRT Offs attended the First Development Conference of Sulaimaniyah Province on February 5-6 under the theme: Decision-making, Responsibility, Transparency, and Honesty. Numerous committees were formed from members of the provincial government, the local population, and non-governmental organizations to brainstorm and report on a wide range of issues affecting infrastructure, economic development, and civic society.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: The conference was a modest step by the Governor of Sulaimaniyah to involve the citizenry and the private sector in the political process. The event also served to bolster popular support for the Governor. It remains to be seen what concrete results will occur if and when the final conference report is reviewed by the Kurdish National Assembly. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

ATTENDEES

¶3. (SBU) The Governor of Sulaimaniyah, Dana Ahmed Majeed, presided over the First Development Conference which included the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), KRG Minister of Housing and Reconstruction, KRG Minister of Planning, KRG Parliament members, Sulaimaniyah Provincial Council members, all 66 Sulaimaniyah District and Sub-District Mayors, representatives from the media, the RRT, U.S. Army Civil Affairs 25th ID, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Research Triangle Institute provided technical and logistical support.

COMMITTEE FORMATION

¶4. (SBU) The Governor appointed working committees that included 10-12 citizens from various sectors of the economy to meet and put forth an action plan for his review. All reports will be consolidated and presented to the Kurdistan National Assembly for implementation (no date provided). The following working committees were established: Government Administration, Provincial Economics, Water, Electricity, Roads and Reconstruction, Agriculture, Industry, Education, Traffic and Transportation, Health, Environment, Civil Society, Women, Tourism, Sport, Youth, Handicaps, Writers and Artists, Children, and Elderly.

CONFERENCE WILL HELP GOVERNOR

¶5. (C) In a meeting on February 11, the Governor of Sulaimaniyah told RRT Off the conference reflects his ability to mobilize popular support. He also stated his expectation that the event would positively impact his relations with KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani - a Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) member - and enhance his popularity with sport and youth groups operating outside the dominant Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Sulaimaniyah Province.

¶6. (SBU) Dana Ahmed Majeed is a PUK member but does not hold a position of considerable influence within the party. The Director Generals of Sulaimaniyah Province in the various economic and social sectors do not report to him directly but to the Ministries or agencies in Erbil where the KDP dominates.

KHALILZAD